Pulpit Preaching

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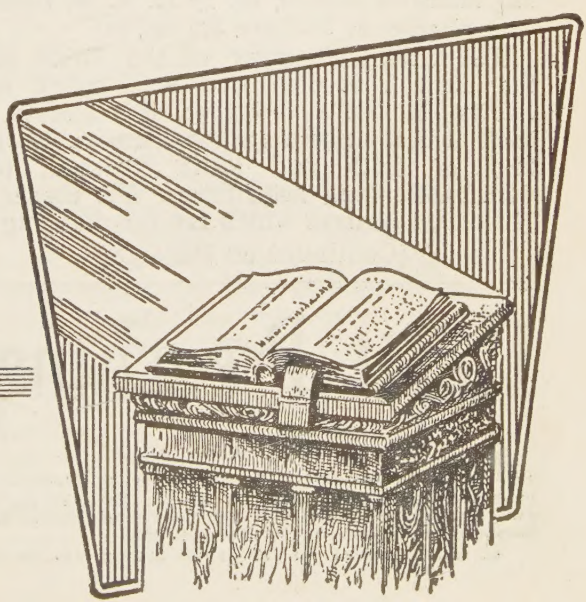

A PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL
FOR MINISTERS

Editorial Comments

The editors and publisher of PULPIT PREACHING join in extending to our readers a wish that the Christmas season may bring both opportunities of service and an abiding satisfaction in a work well done.

This month's appropriate emphases are "Season of Carols" and "Advent Adventures." Next month's subjects will be "Profile of Christ" and "Enjoyment of Life." The January topic will be "The Breadth of a Christian's Concern" and February themes, "Season of Renewal" and "The Easter Confidence."

Books For Pulpit Preaching

God's Word to His People, Charles Duell Kean (Westminster Press, 187 pp., $3.50)

The Jews from Cyrus to Herod, Norman H. Snaith (Abingdon Press, 208 pp., $2.50)

The Greatest Life, Frank C. Laubach (Fleming H. Revell, 192 pp., $2.50)

The Inspired Letters, Frank C. Laubach (Thomas Nelson & Sons, 221 pp., $1.50)

The Mind Goes Forth, Harry and Bonaro Overstreet (W. W. Norton, 384 pp., $3.95)

From Darkness to Light, ed. by Victor Gollancz (Harper & Brothers, 683 pp., $5)

Faith, Hope and Love, Emil Brunner (Westminster Press, 79 pp., $1.50)

The Living of These Days, Harry Emerson Fosdick (Harper & Brothers, 324 pp., $4)

The Cup of Fury, Upton Sinclair (Channel Press, 190 pp., $3)

Understanding and Counseling the Alcoholic, Howard J. Clinebell, Jr. (Abington Press, 252 pp., $3.75)

The Ministers Manual, ed. by M. K. W. Heicher (Harper & Brothers, 375 pp., $3)

The interrelatedness of the Bible and the Church is presented with spirit and clarity in *God's Word to His People,* a book which lingers in the memorable history of faith and looks forward, too, with challenging helpfulness. The reader is given perspectives which are far-reaching as

(Continued on Page 13)

Worth Quoting

The following paragraphs are from *Chose a Parson* by Phyllis Stark and pu lished by the Oxford University Press New York. Mrs. Stark is the wife of Bisho Leland Stark, one-time rector of the Churc of the Epiphany in Washington, D. C., ar now Bishop Coadjustor of the Diocese Newrak.

* * * *

Many a preacher eager to improve h also found a tape or wire recorder usefu It represents a painless way in which a ve try or church board can help its ministe especially if he has no wife, although ma ried or not most parsons will welcome suc an addition in the church office. It h countless uses, not least of which is enablin the preacher to hear what his voice soun like to those who listen to it Sunday aft Sunday. . . .

Besides, chances are the recorder wi make him more sympathetic with his liste ers in other ways. Shortly after Leland a quired the one that he and his associat used at Epiphany, he brought it home o Saturday afternoon to transcribe his se mon. After he had finished, he lay down the sofa to listen as he played it back. Whe I came into the library ten minutes late his voice was vigorously preaching, but was sound asleep! Ever since then I ha noted that he is wont to look benevolently, not enviously, at a somnolent pewman.

* * * *

When a minister has prepared the sermo and chosen what is for him the best metho of preaching, the final hurdle is the actu delivery itself. It is perhaps at this poi that we who are parsons' wives may be most help. The paradoxical nature of o task is symbolized in the response a disti guished minister made when he was bei honored on the occasion of the fortieth a niversary of his ordination. It was a mo sumptuous and eulogistic soiree. Unfo tunately, the good man had a speech imped

(Continued on Page 14)

Pulpit Preaching

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THEODORE P. FERRIS
EVERETT W. PALMER
ARTHUR H. KOLSTI
RALPH W. SOCKMAN
CHARLES R. BELL, JR.
ENSWORTH REISNER

What Christmas Really Means

THEODORE P. FERRIS, Trinity Church. Boston, Massachusetts

While this sermon was still simmering in y mind, shapeless and without any form all, I went to the Children's Hospital to e a sick child. I arrived just after lunch, nd the children were all resting. There ere no other visitors on the floor and the ooms were darkened. I could see the little gures, some of them curled up quietly leep, some of them obviously not asleep, nd in pain. I knew that most of the children n that floor had little or no hope of recov-y. And as I looked around I noticed the hristmas decorations on the walls and in e windows; in some of the rooms there ere little Christmas trees.

I thought to myself, What does Christ-as mean in a place like this? Some people ight almost think it was a mockery. It tells e story of a baby that was born well and ealthy and strong, and grew up to be a an and to fulfill his purpose and mission life. It might seem cruel to tell that story a place where children's lives are blight-right from the beginning and where life nipped in the bud before it has a chance grow.

And then I went on to ask myself this estion, What does Christmas mean in the rk places of the world? In the homes here there is no happiness, in the lives at apparently have no future but suffer-g, in the slums where children haven't a ir chance for a real life, in the wards of e mental hospitals where people are con-sed and bewildered and have no real com-unication with the world around them, in e prisons where lives are twisted and warted and the innocent and the guilty ingle, in the hearts that are broken in ief?

LIFE'S DARK PLACES

What does Christmas mean in the dark aces of your life? Perhaps there is no isis at the moment, but I imagine that ere are very few people who somewhere, dden behind the proud facades of their es, haven't dark places—the things hid-n behind their pretenses, the things that they are ashamed of, buried long since in the archives of the past but still disturbing the peace of the present; the disappoint-ments that sting like thorns; the stubborn habits that they have struggled with all their lives and yet have not been able to overcome, much less handle wisely; the empty places that have never been filled.

Then I thought to myself, If Christmas doesn't mean anything in these dark places of the world, it doesn't mean anything at all. And, furthermore, if you can find out what Christmas means in the darkness, you will know what Christmas *really means*. That is the way the sermon began, you see, these impressions flooding in upon my Christmas consciousness, refusing to be put aside in favor of brighter, easier concerns, and as I came home and tried to prepare this ser-mon, I prepared it with all this in the back of my mind.

This is what I put down first. When God came into the world as a man, He chose one of the dark corners of the world to be born in. There were plenty of bright spots in the world then just as there are now. Rome was brilliant and powerful; it had a society that was sophisticated and educated, intelligent and attractive. Alexandria to the south was a city of culture and behind it was the anci-ent grandeur of Egypt and the pyramids. Corinth and Athens were still living in the afterglow of their glory, and there were people all around the Roman Empire, east and west, north and south, who were living what we might call a "gilt-edge existence," successful, happy, talented, and influential.

But God chose one of the dark corners of the world to be born in. The Jews were strange people, as they still are. They were neither popular nor successful. Individually successful, to be sure, as they are now, but not as a people. They were then as they are now the dispossessed people of the earth. They lived on their disappointments and re-grets, even though they were still reaching for the stars in hope. Their little land had been tossed back and forth like a ball between the great empires to the east and west of

them, and the army of foreigners literally tramped through it for centuries. At the time that all this that we are speaking about happened, they were living under a regime that they hated. The Romans were the successors of the Greeks and the Persians, and the Babylonians and the Assyrians.

DISTINGUISHED BY PIETY

Moreover, Mary and Joseph were plain people, they were distinguished by nothing but their piety. They were little people, the kind of people that are pushed around in the world. The Emperor had recently made a decree that everyone should be registered in a census; he wanted to know exactly how many people there were in his provinces, and where they were, and who they were, and how many children they had, and how much money they had, so that the taxes could be levied to his greatest advantage. And people were required to go to their native town. Joseph came from Bethlehem, David's town, so the couple started a trip of one hundred and fifty miles, not far as we think of it today, but far if you had to walk it, or travel it by donkey. When they got to Bethlehem they were too late. The inn was crowded, every room was taken. It wasn't anybody's fault; many other people had come for the same thing, and they had come first, and they were served first, quite rightly. There wasn't any room at all for them except in the stable.

So God became Man in a stable. God, in other words as we look at it from above now, not from the human side, was born in darkness. That is one thing that Christmas means, and it is a good place to begin. It means that God is in the darkness as well as in the light. Sometimes as I think of it at the moment, I don't know if your experience tallies with mine, sometimes He is almost more present in the darkness than He is in the light not actually of course, but we are more aware of His presence because the darkness shuts out the distractions. And so Christmas means this, that in the darkness of the Children's Hospital, God is present. He is present in the darkness of the broken heart. In whatever darkness may be swallowing you up at this very moment God is present. You may not recognize Him any more than the people did when He was born in the darkness of the stable, but He is there, and the people whose eyes have been opened know that He is there. In other words, there is no situation so bleak that there is not the possibility of life stirring in it. You may not know what it is at the time; you may not see any possibility at all in the future, as I admit I couldn't see much possibility of life as I walked through that ward in the Children's Hospital, but I know that there is because God became Man in the dark places of the world.

GOD'S CHOICE OF DARKNESS

The psalmist had an intimation of this even before Christ was born. "The darkness is no darkness with Thee, but the night is as clear as the day; the darkness and the light to thee are both alike."

Thousands of years later, Christopher Fry introduced one of his plays with a quotation from a man named Fabre. This is the quotation:

> "the weather was stormy; the sky heavily clouded; the darkness . . . profound. It was across this maze of leafage, and in absolute darkness that the butterflies had to find their way in order to attain the end of their pilgrimage.
>
> "Under such conditions the screech-owl would not dare to forsake its olive-tree. The butterfly . . . goes forward without hesitation. . . . So well it directs its tortuous flight that, in spite of all the obstacles to be evaded, it arrives in a state of perfect freshness, its great wings intact. . . . The darkness is light enough."

There are a great many people like the screech-owl who are fearful of the dark and who hesitate to set out to make their way through it, but there are, thank heaven, Christians in the world, and I am sure other people who catch this spirit anonymously, who are like the butterflies, and they go on their pilgrimage through the dark and arrive with their great wings intact, because the darkness for them is light enough. When God chose to reveal Himself in the fullness of His glory, He did it in one of the dark places of the world.

DARKNESS AND LIGHT

But Christmas certainly means more than that for when God came into the darkness of the world, light came into that darkness. There are three things to say about that light, and they are all things you have thought of and I know that I have spoken of before, but never in this particular context. And the first is that the light that came into the world at Christmas is not what we ordinarily mean by light. Light is what

e need to see by. We see the things around , that is, the furniture in this building, e books in our hands, by the light of the n, but we also want to see the things yond us, the things that are not seeable. nd we see these things not by the light of e sun, but by the light of the Son of God. other words, the light that we are talk- g about at Christmas time was not a light all, but a Life.

One of the things that we want to see sperately, as we grow up and mature in e and try to find our place in it, is the eaning of life, not only our own little per- nal, private life, but life in general, the eaning of life on this planet. The sun does t throw any light upon that, but Jesus es. And as you look at life and seek its eaning in the light of the life of Jesus, u begin to see what it means. It means not get but to give, not to preserve but to rve, not to keep but to care. It means what sus meant.

Another thing you want to see is the way go through life, especially through the fficult parts of life. The sun throws no ght on that, but Jesus does. "I am the way," said, and the way is the way of giving d of suffering, of living deeply and trust- g God instinctively even though all the rrounding events arouse your suspicion d doubt. This is the way to go. This is the ght we need to see these things by, and e only light in this kind of darkness is e light of a life. The only light that penet- tes the darkness of a place like the Chil- en's Hospital is the life of a nurse or a ctor or a parent. There isn't any other ght, for the Life is the light.

ILLUMINATED DARKNESS

The second thing about the light is that is light did not banish the darkness. It n't like the light that you turn on in a room hen you go in at night; the minute you sh the button the light goes on, the dark gone. It's not like that. It is more like a arch light that sends a beam of light rough the darkness, and yet leaves the rkness in walls on both sides.

Stop to think about it for a minute. Jesus d not destroy the darkness of the Roman le, nor did he lift a hand to push it aside, t he cut a path of light right through the rkness of that rule which was the path a kingdom not of this world, the King- m of God. Jesus didn't eliminate pain, or sease, or death. In spite of all the people healed and the power that he released to renew life, he would have been the last to claim that he had eliminated these things that make men suffer. He didn't eliminate them; he illuminated them by his own spirit. Jesus didn't abolish sin. We don't have to be reminded of that, do we, because sin goes on all around us and within us, and we are still selfish and greedy and lustful and proud. Jesus didn't abolish sin in the world, but he sent a shaft of light through the sin of the world, and that light is the forgive- ness of God's love. Jesus didn't banish the darkness of the night in which he was be- trayed; he pierced that darkness with his own steadfastness.

There is no darkness in which there are not some streaks of light. In the wards of the hospital that I keep going back to, be- cause that is where all this started in my mind, there are the streaks of light—the care of nurses and doctors who are living dedicated lives, not perfect lives, of course, but dedicated to making the lives that are there as comfortable and as happy as they can. There is the love of friends surround- ing all the people, the children and the par- ents. Then occasionally there is a parent, perhaps shallow when he comes into this ex- perience, growing deeper and deeper in his understanding of the things that are beyond him and reaching further and further through worlds that are above him which he never had dreamed of before. These are streaks of light. They do not banish the darkness, but they pierce it.

THE LIGHT SHINES

And the third and last thing is the most remarkable of all, I suppose, and yet it is the fact about the light which I shall say least about. The light is still shining! It is remarkable, in a way, but it happens oc- casionally that when the local circumstances which produce a thing, and which by the years and the wearing of time are gradually destroyed, the thing that they have produc- ed is great enough to continue its own life even though the setting and the context have completely disappeared. The bowl that holds the bulbs, in other words, is taken away, but the bulbs go on flowering! The whole poli- tical situation in which Rome was imposing its government upon the little people, the local situation in which the Jews found themselves religiously and morally, this has all been forgotten, but the Light that it pro- duced still shines, and it shines, embarrass- ingly enough, in us.

It flickers every once in a while, and

sometimes we wonder if at certain periods of the world's history it may not go out, but it never has. The darkness is made up of all the evil that we can think of in the world, and the sin, disease, the pain and the suffering, yet all of it together have never been able to put this light out. It is a light, of course, that shines independently of us, but I think that we had better face it now, frankly, that by and large if it is to shine in the world today, it is going to shine through us. I would not do anything or say anything that would take the joy out of your Christmas because I am trying to lead you to a joy that is deeper than the superficial joy that some of you usually find in Christmas, and I would not do what I always hesitate to do, that is, to end a sermon like this with words of advice. It is not my place to give you advice. But let me say just this one word: Don't let this Christmas be a selfish Christmas, completely selfish, all wrapped up in yourselves and your own family. No light will shine in you if this is a selfish Christmas. Find some way to let this spirit go through you to one of the dark corners of the world. Do what you can; it may be only a small thing, but small things are sometimes the most important, to keep this light shining. It will shine anyway, in spite of you, because it comes from God, but God is counting on you to keep the light that pierces the darkness shining.

I hope you have begun to see what Christmas means in the dark places of the world, and that leads us to what it really means, everywhere and anywhere. God became a Man in a dark place, yet in that darkness his presence was a light that made a way through it. That light still shines, but it shines further if you let it shine in you.

As I kept thinking about it, I realized that the author of the Fourth Gospel, Saint John, really put it all in one line. Strictly speaking, the line refers to the period before the birth of Jesus, but it equally applies to the time afterward. This is the line: "In him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men. The Light still shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out." That is what Christmas means anywhere, and everywhere. The light still shines. Praise God for that. And the darkness has never, and will never, we pray, put it out.

Capture the Radiance

EVERETT W, PALMER, First Methodist Church, Glendale, California

In Him was life and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. — John 1:4-5

"In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." That, in one sentence, is the biography of Jesus Christ. Study this greatest Man, study Him for a lifetime. Give your mind to His wisdom, your heart to His spirit, your life to His purpose. Then, in the end, try to describe Him. Say what He means to you and to the world.

Though we may write a book to tell of Him, I venture we will not improve upon this brief, majestic statement of John's Gospel, except to put it in the present tense: "In Him (is) life, and the life (is) the light of men."

So, little wonder from the beginning His birthday has been celebrated with light. First: wise men following a star-lighted trail; humble shepherds transfixed by Heaven's light; a young Mother cradling her first-born child, looking down upon Him with the light of wonder and love shining in her eyes. And, even now: lights on Christmas trees, lights in Christmas windows, lights on houses, lights over city streets. Everywhere at Christmas, Light! All around the world, Light! Wherever He is known there is light: light of healing hope; light of redeeming good will; light of God's outreaching Love. "In him (is) life, and the life (is) the light of men." What a biography! What a tribute!

But, though the Light shines, we can be blind to it. We can have eyes and see not. To all the greatness of what Christ is and can accomplish in and through us we may be impervious as a post, blind as a bat.

One day I watched two blind men feel their way down a city street. They tapped along cautiously, arms linked, outside hand holding white-tipped cane; two men groping their way through darkness. It saddened the heart to watch them. All about was the splendor of Christmas, but not for them. They could not see the grandeur of the star-lighted sky, the loveliness of a candle-lighted window, the spangled glory of a Christmas tree, the glowing faces of little children. Surrounded by the beauty of Christmas they could not see it. They trudged through

rkness, groping their way. That was tra-
c.

But it was as nothing compared with the
ight of those who have eyes but see not,
hose hearts and minds are blind, who live
the midst of Christmas but fail to possess
s radiance.

Let us capture Light which no darkness
n overcome.

PRISONERS OF HOPE

First, to capture the radiance of Christ-
as we must become, to use a phrase of
achariah, "Prisoners of Hope." When we
op to think of it, Christmas is another
ord for "Hope."

One afternoon several of us adults were
ecial guests at a Christmas party for un-
rprivileged children. On a stage, front
d center, was a great and regal throne,
proached by an awesome stairway of ten
twelve steps. It was empty and waiting.
acing this imposing throne, so high and
ted up, were rows of little children sitting
hushed expectancy.

Then, outside was a thrilling clatter.
bove the din of sleigh bells and prancing
ofs a gruff but kindly voice shouted to
s prancing reindeer, "Whoa Ginger; Whoa
itzen!" Then, in the twinkling of an eye,
ere he was—Santa Claus! He was every-
ing St. Nicholas is supposed to be: red
it, white whiskers; a jolly roly-poly old
anta Claus with a big stomach and upon
s shoulder a huge white bag stuffed full
toys and candy.

He was the best Santa Claus I ever saw.
ut the children, they were the greatest!
heir rapt faces and shining eyes far sur-
ssed the glory of St. Nick. One little lad,
dinarily the noisiest and most rambunc-
ous of all, was sitting on the edge of his
air, utterly entranced, not making a move
a sound. In the middle of the front row,
essed in a play suit and red sweater, was
little girl peering at Santa now and again
rough her fingers, as if unable to bear
e full glory of the sight. All were enthrall-
with a great and glad expectancy. They
ere prisoners of hope.

That is what makes Christmas, Christ-
as for littl folk and for us all.

Christmas was born of hope, hope devout-
nurtured and cherished through the cen-
ries. Christmas has lived in the light of
at hope and in the power of its fulfillment
er since. It comes again and again through
e sweep and swing of the years sounding
e trumpets of hope, the greatest hopes the heart can know, hopes that make us men, even the children of God.

So, this Christmas Eve let us remember with fresh appreciation the worth of Hope. George Herbert once said, "Hope is the poor man's bread." But it is more. Hope is every man's bread. Without it the heart dies and we lose our way in the night. There is an old saying, "Where there is life there is hope." A greater truth is expressed when we put it in reverse, "Where there is hope, there is life!" Cynicism is the refuge of a cowardly mind. Despair is the surrender of a tired, defeated heart. But those who will "Hope against hope" carry the banner of progress, sound the trumpets for every victory that blesses mankind. Wherever they go, there is light!

This Christmas, may the greatest of all hopes claim our hearts anew: hope that peace can put a final end to war; hope that truth triumphs over error; hope that every-one of us to the least and last is precious, infinitely precious in God's sight; hope that God's love can conquer our bent to evil, cleanse and lift our hearts into goodness and gladness; hope that all things, even the worst, can be made productive of good. Those who will be prisoners of such hopes capture a radiance, even that of Christmas.

PRISONERS OF GOOD WILL

Second, to capture the full glory of Christmas we must be pioneers of good will. The accent is on "Pioneers," for whoever would practice good will where it counts must go ahead of the crowd, sometimes in a danger-ous journey.

If Christmas is another word for "Hope," it is no less synonymous with "Good Will." The angel chorus began it. Today, wherever Christmas is celebrated, one sees and hears th symbols of good will. Every Christmas greeting called across a street proclaims it. Every Christmas carol rings with it. Every Christmas card tells of it. Every Christmas gift speaks of it. Every Christmas tree and shining window is bright with it. Every-where and in everything Christmas is anoth-er word for "good will." It is God telling man how to have heaven on earth, beginning in his own heart.

Without good will, how terrible the dark-ness! With it, how great and good the light!

So this Christmas let us re-enlist for the unending adventure of good will. On every hand frontiers beckon.

Early in 1945 an eighteen year old lad had a premonition of death. He was in the

Army. Writing a letter home, he requested his parents to use the $10,000 of government insurance coming to them in the event of his death to establish a scholarship for Japanese to study in America at the wars end. Shortly thereafter this lad, Private Robert Johnstone, was killed in hand-to-hand combat on the Island Luzon.

Three years later, in the Fall of 1948, Life Magazine carried a story in pictures of Robert Nishiyama, former suicide pilot of the Japanese Naval Air Corps and son of a Japanese Christian family. He had just enrolled as a Freshman at Lafayette College in Pennsylvania. His roommate was an ex-Marine studying for the ministry. His close friend was another Freshman named Bruce Johnstone. Bruce's older brother had been the Private Robert Johnstone killed on Luzon. The $10,000 paid by the government to his parents provided the scholarship which brought Robert Nishiyama to America.

The Magazine showed this Japanese lad being welcomed to the Johnstone home. The warmth of their welcome and the sincerity of their friendliness could not have been more genuine.

Remembering that incident, I wrote a letter several months ago to the Dean of Men at Lafayette College. I wanted to know what had happened during the intervening years. The Dean replied with a good report. Robert Nishiyama had completed four years at Lafayette, graduating with an excellent scholastic record. He had become an active member of the College Church and an outstanding Christian leader on the campus. He and Bruce Johnstone had remained fast friends. All the Johnstone family had taken him into their affection as one of their own.

I do not know where former suicide pilot Robert Nishiyama spent Christmas each year he was at Lafayette, but I can make a strong guess. Neither do I know the Johnstone family but I am certain that in those years when the wounds of their sorrow were most painful and temptation to bitterness most virulent, they found healing and strength in Jesus Christ. They discovered the rewards of being "Pioneers in Good Will." They captured some of the "radiance." And that is not a guess!

This Christmas enlist anew in the Christian adventure of good will. Life is too short and too precious for anything else.

PEACE WILL COME

Is there a buried bitterness festering in your heart? This moment forgive whoever may have wronged you. Let the cleanness and light of that bigness come like a gift of Heaven to you. Pioneer with an act of good will. You will capture some of the radiance of Christmas.

Does someone try to harm you: talk against you, unjustly criticise and condemn you, work against you, oppose you with a heart of malice? Does someone persist in being mean, curt, and ugly in spirit? Is there such a person? Then, in a humble and quiet way, do him a good turn. Do something generous and fine for him. So far as possible do it in such an unpretentious way he may not even guess you are the one who has befriended him. And don't stop with one such deed—keep it up. Study to repay every evil done by a wise kindness, just as Jesus taught.

Then a wonderful peace will come to live in our heart, the peace of Christ our Lord. A new and mighty strength nurtures and sustains us. We will capture some of the imperishable radiance of Christmas. Best of all, God can use us to help some soul lost in the night to find Light!

Is there a person, a family, or a special cause of the Church you can help without any possibility of future gain for yourself? Then deny yourself, do without something you really want, and give it. Do this wisely and so far as possible without anyone knowing about it but yourself and God. That is the spirit of Christmas. It releases within our hearts a radiance.

On every hand are frontiers calling for "Pioneers in Good Will." The hymn says it for us:

> Through love to light!
> O wonderful the way
> That leads from darkness
> To the perfect day.

Two blind men tapping their way down a street, gay and beautiful with Christmas; two men groping their way through darkness when all around is light and loveliness. To remember them saddens the heart. But more tragic is the plight of those who having eyes, see not; who, surrounded by the appeal of Christmas, are blind to its hope, alien to its good will, indifferent to its Saviour. They are not only blind. They are the unburied dead.

"In him (is) life, and the life (is) the light
Capture the radiance!
of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

. I. P.'s Excluded

ARTHUR H. KOLSTI, Lyonsville Congregational Church, LaGrange, Illinois

I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is humble and contrite in heart. — Isaiah 57:15

An expression that has come into common sage in recent years is the expression V.I.P. f course, we know that these initials con- ey the title, Very Important Person. With ur global commitments today, the V.I.P.'s avel far and wide. The announcement that V. I. P. is coming can put a mayor's office, n army base, or an embassy into a dither f preparation. Provision must be made to bserve all the niceties of protocol, to insure ie welcome and comfort of the guest. Many . I. P.'s expect regal treatment. In recent onths we have seen a constant flow of . I. P.'s. We are familiar with the fanfare ttending their arrival and departure.

Dwell, if you will, on the arrival of the ost important person ever to come upon ie face of the earth. There is no fanfare, no rotocol, no bustle of activity, no official elegation. Herod is not notified, the Ro- an officials are not alerted, no advance ord is sent to the pillars of the church. he V. I. P.'s are excluded.

Yet an event of such significance should e attended by some preparation. It was. own through the centuries a glowing hope as nurtured in the hearts of devout people. oseph, Mary, Zechariah, Elizabeth, and ich people in whom the hope persisted ere alerted in one way or another. Of ourse, their names were not found in the cial register. They were quite ordinary. n fact, they may have been less than ordin- ry. Certainly a man of some weight could ave bluffed or bought his way into the inn.

So the event enshrined in believing hearts r some two thousand years takes place ithout the V. I. P.'s. Herod sleeps, official- om sleeps, the High Priest sleeps. In the able the faces of the poor wait expectantly. hey seem to know that this is no ordinary rth. Luke tells us of angelic visitors. At ny rate, these folks seem to have some nowledge of what's what in the world that vening.

In newscasting we hear the expression sed, "a reliable source," or a source "close the president." These expressions refer to adowy V. I. P.'s who are supposedly "in e know." Reporters seek them out for tips nd scoops. The Advent news is disclosed to one of th V. I. P.s.

PEOPLE WHO KNOW

Who are the people who really know what's going on in the world? They are of a different sort. Though the world does not count them important their station is very high. They may be far from all worldly authority, but they are close to that Authority above authority. "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with the humble and contrite in heart." The Marys and Josephs, the Zechariahs and Elizabeths, who live simply and devoutly; the shepherds, who long for a better day; the wisemen, who seek to order life by higher principles— these are people with real inside information. Ask them what is going on in the world. They will tell you about the love, rule, and work of God; the sin, rebellion, and wandering of man; the Christ who heals, restores, forgives.

Many with a great noise assert that they have the facts. The V. I. P. general counsels power and might. The V. I. P. official counsels toughness. The V. I. P. businessman cries, "Production is the key." The V. I. P. psychologist points to our repressions and inhibitions, and then counsels, "Express yourself." Do they know? Or is there some John crying in the wilderness, whose voice we cannot hear? The nativity people are not outspoken, but their memory recalls us to something profound. They were poor and hunted, yet they witness to us of peace and rejoicing.

We need their memory for we are a discontented people. Our mood is discontented, restless, anxious. Where does it all start. Perhaps in school days. We want recognition. The football star gets it one way, the scholar another. What about the in between majority? Is this where it starts? Move out into adult life. The competition increases, the drive for success grows, the discontent increases. From all sides the hucksters bombard us with a false ideal: "You need the forward look." "Men of distinction use our brand." "Your hair does not shine." "Our product will help you get your man." "We are a happy family since we became a two car family." There you have the appeal of fear, sex, and snobbery. And we fall for it. The discontent grows. We equate

greatness with station and culture with comfort. The discontent increases. It leads to anxiety. It produces faction and division.

HOW CHRISTMAS COMES

We need to stop and think. We need perspective. We are busy people. In some families both adults work. There is no time for solitude and reflection. There is time only for work unfinished. Sometimes we are obsessed by work. It becomes our master. We need to ask, "What, after all, is the point of my life and why am I here?"

Christmas is a time to look on reality itself as we stand hushed before the mystery of Incarnation. It is a time to move off the pedestal of self and measure our lives in the light of eternity. Christmas in general will come to the world at large and even pagans will have a tree, a banquet, gifts. Christmas in particular comes only to those who wait expectantly. The graces of Bethlehem, peace, joy, hope, do not come to all men. They come not into busy lives, into grasping lives, into lives inflated with a wrong sense of self-importance. The high and holy God choses to dwell with the humble and contrite in heart.

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming, But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him still,
The dear Christ enters in.

The Heart of Christmas

RALPH W. SOCKMAN, Christ Church, New York, New York

A deeply suggestive touch has been given to the Christmas portrayal by a certain artist. He shows the shepherds on the hillsides looking up into the heavens whence they hear the angelic chorus singing, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased." But at the shepherd's feet is one of their dogs. into the heavens with the shepherds. His The dog is alert, poised, but he is not looking head is turned in another direction. The dog is aware that something unusual is happening, but he does not know what it is. He is missing the message heard by his masters, the shepherds.

In depicting the difference between the dog and the shepherds, the artist was in line with the gospel portrayals of the Christmas event, for in them there are such differences of observation. The shepherds heard a song. The wise men from the east saw a star which the other dwellers of the region, even the shepherds, did not see. And neither the song nor the star disturbed the dining and slumbering guests in the inn. Mary, the mother, pondered thoughts too deep and tender for even the wise men and shepherds to comprehend. And a few days later Simeon, an aged priest, saw in this child a religious portent which even Mary and Joseph did not fathom.

What varying degrees of meaning Bethlehem held for those first beholders. And then there was the dog. He too went along with the shepherds. He looked on in his dumb way. He went to Bethlehem but Bethlehem did not get into him.

As on the first Christmas, so it is today. There will be such differing degrees of meaning and thrill derived from the day. There will be the breathless expectancy of little children, too eager to keep their eyes closed until their elders are astir. There will be the radiant happiness of parents rejoicing in the presence of their children and their power to make them happy through gifts. There will be the paler thrill of those further removed from the association of children, like that of the elderly man pictured in a cartoon at the toy counter, saying to the salesgirl, "I am getting these for my little nieces and nephews whom I haven't seen for twenty years." He was feeling the flutter of a long past childhood. Others there are for whom Christmas has become merely a festival of urbanity, rather than of Christianity—a day for exchanging gifts, calling on friends, feasting, even reveling.

GLORY OF THE LORD

In all this diversity of meaning found in Christmas, there is one feature which all of us must get if it is to be truly Christmas. Perhaps the most inclusive aspect of the event is expressed in the words describing the first approach to the shepherds. It says: "The glory of the Lord shone round about them."

What does the expression "the glory of the Lord" mean to us? For one thing, it means *wonder*. The capacity to wonder is

lled our most pregnant human faculty, r out of it are born our art, our science d our religion. Whether animals are cap-le of wonder is a question beyond our so-tion. But, however it be with the lower imals, man is born to wonder.

And wonder grows with knowledge, pro-ded the spirit of the learner keeps grow-g. Wordsworth knew more about nature an the peasants working the field yet he id:

> The meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

And Lord Tennyson from the height of s poet-laureateship could look at a flower the crannied wall and glimpse through it wonder of all creation.

Yes, our sense of wonder should grow th experience and wisdom. Our universe so vast and varied that the more we know, e more we feel remains to be known.

And nowhere is this more true than in gard to Christmas. There is a childhood nder aroused by the story of Bethlehem. ne eyes of little children open wide as they ar about the manger and the magi, and e shepherds, with the dumb oxen looking , while Mary and Joseph ponder the my-fying event. But is this Christmas wond-one of those things about which we are say: "When I was a child, I spoke as a ild, I thought as a child, I reasoned as a ild: when I became a man, I gave up child-ı ways?" Is the birth of Christ a wonder outgrow, or one which grows with us?

EXPANDING WONDER

The answer to that question depends on . If we ponder the Christmas event deep-enough, we discover its expanding wond-. Consider the method and growth of its ebration. Think how the date of Decem-r 25th was determined. The date was tak-over into the church calendar from the man celebration of the winter solstice, ıen after the shortest day of the year, the ht and warmth of the sun begin to return rthward. Jesus, a babe born in a manger, ought something into the world which so ırmed the hearts of men that it reminded em of the returning warmth of the sun. ıd his birthday took over and transform-the Roman festival of the sun.

Great also is the wonder that the celebra-n of Christ's birth should gather to itself e fir tree from pre-Christian Germany, e yule log from pagan Iceland, the mistle-toe from pre-Christian England and the jolly Saint Nicholas from Holland. It is as if Christ embodied the goodness and glad-ness embedded in the best myths and legends of all peoples. It is as if this old world was strewn with unrealized hopes, and then Je-sus came like a magnet to draw them unto himself. Phillips Brooks spoke with histori-cal as well as poetic insight when he wrote of the little town of Bethlehem:

> Yet in thy dark streets shineth
> The everlasting Light;
> The hopes and fears of all the years
> Are met in Thee tonight.

The wonder of the Christmas event grows the more we watch the way it has captured hearts and spread joy down the centuries. Nothing less can describe its effect on people than to say, "the glory of the Lord shone round about them."

THE GLOW OF BETHLEHEM

Along with wonder there is a second ele-ment in the glory of the Lord and that is the *glow* which Bethlehem brings. The wonder of the shepherds warmed into the glow of gladness.

And how about ourselves? We say "Merry Christmas"—and some people just make merry. In many circles, Christmas parties have come to suggest artifical stimulants. But there is a difference between having fun and being happy. There is a difference be-tween "getting a kick" and getting a glow. Christmas should have for us deep rich last-ing radiance.

What is the secret of the glow which Beth-lehem brings? Well, it is a kind of unanalyz-able emotion, isn't it? After James Russell Lowell heard Emerson deliver the Phi Betta Kappa address at Harvard in 1867, he wrote: "Emerson's oration began nowhere and ended everywhere, and as always with that divine man, it left you feeling that something beautiful had passed that way—something more beautiful than anything else, like the rising and setting of the stars."

So with Christmas, it defies analysis but it begets a warmth like the kindling of a grate fire in a cold room. The setting of the Bethlehem scene is cold enough, to be sure. An imperial tax decree, a peasant couple wearied with travel, a woman heavy with child, the closed door of an inn, a lowly manger—and lurking in the background a bloody Herod. Yet despite all those cold and cruel features, the total impression of Beth-lehem is one of gladness. The adoration of

the shephrds, the gifts of the magi, the protecting love of Joseph and the brooding tenderness of Mary—all combine to give a glow which makes us forget the hard conditions and to feel the goodness of God and of his creatures.

The warmth of this holy season is the glow which comes from getting back to the simple genuine things after being immersed in the artificial and spiced-up attractions of modern life. That is why crowds pour out of our city's theaters and night-clubs to sing Christmas carols in the churches.

CHRISTMAS RADIANCE

The glow of Christmas is the radiance which comes from the innocence and eagerness of childhood when we get rid of our heavy grown-up-ness and smart sophistication, which we sometimes mistakenly call our wisdom. As Jesus said to some adults once, "Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter enter the kingdom of heaven." We do not need to reduce our knowledge to the level of childhood but we must recapture the spirit of childhood if we are to enter the glory of Christmas.

Also the glow of Christmas is the warmth and radiance which come from emptying our hearts of envy and greed so that the spirit of love and goodwill may hold sway. At Christmas time we come a little nearer than at any other time to the goodwill which God meant for us to exercise at all times. At Bethlehem the best in us is born again. The Bible says of the shepherds, "The glory of the Lord shone round about them." What is the glory of the Lord? Oh, it is the wonder and glow about which we have been talking. And of course, it is more, something indefinable. Near my boyhood home was held each year a camp meeting. In the fervor of the revivalism, people would often shout, "glory" or "hallelujah." The people were full of a feeling they could not define. That does not happen in New York, at least not in my church during my sermons! But we do sing our "glories" and our "Hallelujah choruses."

Thank God, on this Christmas, there is no war calling us to die to make men free. But God is calling us to live to make men free. O God, draw us near enough to Bethlehem to feel the wonder and the glow of the Nativity for thine is the kingdom and the power and the *glory* forever and ever.

A Prelude to Christmas

CHARLES R. BELL, JR., First Baptist Church, Pasadena, California

But the angel said unto him Fear not Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear a son. — Luke 1:13

And the angel said unto her Fear not Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. — Luke 1:30

There were two families at the center of the Christmas story living in those days in the little country of Palestine. One was the family of Zacharias and Elizabeth. Both were aged people and their marriage had not been blessed with any children. But Zacharias had been praying that the "reproach" of his wife would be removed. One day while performing the temple rites, an angel appeared unto him saying, "Fear not Zachraias: for thy prayer is heard: and Elizabeth thy wife shall bear a son . . . " The other family was a carpenter named Joseph and his wife, whose name was Mary. And one day, too, an angel came to Mary saying, "Fear not Mary: for thou hast found favour with God and . . . thou shalt bring forth a Son. . ."

The story of these two families and the boys who were born into them is, of course, a well-known fact of history and the central part of the Christmas story. One boy became John the Baptist, who came as the fore-runner of Jesus, while the other was the Saviour of men.

With the recitation of these rather simple facts, let us turn to the thing about the story which is so important as far as this sermon is concerned. How often in His dealings with people, God has given the same message to more than one person at the same time. The real prelude to Christmas, then, is this fact. Whenever God is about to accomplish something, He will make His will known to a "Mary" here and a "Zacharias" there, a star for distant wise-men, a heavenly chorus for simple herdsmen or a penetrating insight to some saintly Simeon. All of these individuals and groups heard the same message at the same time and the same great ends were held up before them. Gods' Son had come into the world!

SIMULTANEOUS REVELATION

This principle of "simultaneous revelation" works not only in the field of our Christian faith, but in all phases of life. The beginning of the first Christmas story was his "prelude." God spoke to Zacharias, *then* to Mary, *then* to the wisemen, *then* to the shepherds and *then* to Simeon. If we explore his concept in relationship to some of life's current problems it holds some significant answers for us.

Let us look first of all, for some help in understanding the future years. Any minister should approach such an assignment cautiously for it is not given men to know what the future will hold so far as specific details are concerned. But we do know the great laws of seed time and harvest always operate. We know beyond any doubt that every river has its beginnings back in the hills in the tiny streams. We know also that the preludes of today will issue forth in great events for tomorrow. Wherever some "forerunner" comes, a "messiah" is sure to follow. Our task is to see what God is saying to men now and we will surely know what is coming in the future. May we then ask, "Where has God been at work? What has He been saying to men?" What has been the "simultaneous revelation" in our time? Without trying to judge too carefully between men, it can be said beyond any doubt, I think, that the great work of the Holy Spirit in the spiritual leaders of our time has been in the direction. The seers of the twentieth century, so far, have been men and women who have seen the goals of a social order that reflects our inner Christian convictions. They have been those who were impatient with our petty theological divisions, our needless wars, our economic injustices, and our prejudices. William Temple in England, Kagawa in Japan, Schweitzer in Africa, and Greenfell in Labrador, Frank Laubach in America and Jane Addams in Hull House —all have outlined the heroic lines for the new and better edifice of tomorrow.

A BETTER FUTURE

If that is the "prelude," then the future is a better world than the one we have today. We may look for a church which deals in broader, deeper and more eternal things. We can expect an industrial and financial order more intelligent and efficient. We shall have a social order more just and Christian. So, as we study this "prelude" to the Nativity season, we find, first of all a great word of hope. Wherever the Holy Spirit is at work today there are seeds being planted in a million hearts. One message, one intention and one goal! Out of this must come a better day for mankind.

In the second place let us explore another idea. We may be sure whenever God plants a seed in our own life, He is also working with other people to help carry that plan to its conclusions. So many of us find loneliness one of life's chief problems. We feel led to do the right thing, but everybody else seems to be doing the wrong thing. We want to bring up our children to be Christian, but so many other parents have lower standards. Then we are overcome by fear and loneliness and give up th struggle. Here is assurance that wherever the angel of God speaks to some Mary saying "Fear not . . . " he is also at the same time speaking to some Zacharias saying the same thing.

One third thought remains. So many people hear the Holy Spirit speaking to them, but because their experience seems a bit different they wonder if it is real and often refuse to believe it. If there is any lesson this study of the Christmas "prelude" should have for us all, it is at this point. God works through different channels to reach men, but it is still the voice and the will of God speaking. He spoke that first Christmas to the wisemen by a star, to the herdsmen by a chorus of voices, to Mary by a vision.

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING

Continued from page 2

The author traces both the course of God's Word and God's people in their companionable historical journey. . . . One of the momentous and important periods in history, the five centuries before Christ, are put into proper and illuminating focus by Dr. Snaith in *The Jews from Cyrus to Herod.* The significance of this intertestamentary time to an understanding of Christianity has long been overlooked by many churchmen. This succinct record furnishes substantial materials for pastor and Bible student.

Dr. Laubach's wide and inspiring ministries are a reflection of the New Testament commission. *The Greatest Life* is the story of Jesus—the "autobiography"—arranged chronologically and offering the words of Christ as translated in the Goodspeed version. *The Inspired Letters* contains the

twenty-one New Testament letters, translated by Dr. Laubach into an English expression which make them immediately clear to every reader. Both books show the affection and understanding of the Bible which Dr. Laubach's career has exemplified.

The Overstreets have awakened the minds of millions to the latent possibilities of the alerted and perceptive minds. *The Mind Goes Forth* is a vigorous story of the drama of understanding. The burden of the book is to show how men can make room in their lives for the opinions of other men. The authors come to grips with the problems of individuals and society and reflect their own understanding of both men and our times. The book is a natural for preachers who must lead in understanding and includes much illustrative material for sermonizing.

"A Confession of Faith in the Form of an Anthology" is the sub-title of *From Darkness to Light.* Within the pages of this large and attractive book is a progression of religious insights which form a sensitive and discerning movement—a pilgrim's progress —from questioning to affirmation. Hundreds of pieces of prose and poetry, chosen with skill from the great writings of the world's inspiring authors, mark the pathway. The individual items offer pastors an abundance of fresh and quotable ideas.

Faith, Hope and Love identifies each of these facts of Christian experience with the experience, past, present and future, of individual Christians. This little volume affords an excellent introduction to the mind and heart of one of the most provocative of contemporary theologians and adds, for those long acquainted with him, another dimension to his mind and spirit.

Living in These Days, the autobiography of Harry Emerson Fosdick, is a remarkable book. Not only is the "art" of biographical writing radiant in these pages, but here also is a portrait, written with verve and insight, of contemporary church life which few men could paint with such authority and discernment. The book is more than the story of a man: it pictures the twentieth century religious mind, its variations and its significance, and the men and movements of our day. At the heart of the book is a compelling faith. The chapter, "Ideas That Have Used Me," is fascinating.

The Cup of Fury is not easy reading, for it is documented with the stories of men who have been overcome by drinking and of a society which has been weakened and tormented by alcohol. Wrenched from human suffering, this narrative is a testimony which cannot be read without heartbreak and uneasiness; but it must be read. . . . *Understanding and Counseling the Alcoholic* is the finest interpretation of the causes and cure of alcoholism that this reader has seen. The author shows now the alcoholic must be understood and how various religious groups have met the problem, and then details the religious resources which the pastor can command in meeting the problem.

The 1957 edition of *The Ministers Manual* is a first-rate source book for the minister. This is the thirty-second volume in a series which stays fresh and vigorous by adding annually new features and new emphases. The comprehensive character of the present volume has something to offer every minister, whatever his homiletic needs may be.

WORTH QUOTING

Continued from page 2

ment which showed up when he became excited; then he was inclined to stutter. Moved deeply by the genuine affection that the occasion represented, he rose to acknowledge it, stuttering out his thanks but modestly noting that there was one person to whom sufficient credit had not been given.

"Th-th-th-thta person is m-m-m-my wife," he sputtered. "All these y-y-y-years she has been a ba-ba-ba-boon to me."

That is what the parson's wife must be to her husband, with and without stuttering. She is his chief rooter; she must also be his severest critic.

* * * *

"Every parson is repeatedly called upon to aid both the deserving and the undeserving poor, but occasionally a happy surprise comes along in the nature of a gift to be dispensed at his discretion. Such an offer came one day from a Greek woman who, with her husband, ran a restaurant. . . .

"But this offer was apparently something more substantial than usual, at least as far as bulk went. For it seemed she and her husband were going back to Greece for an indefinite stay, and they were shutting up shop for the duration. She had, she said, "much flour I nut eble to tek," and she wanted "da Fadda to have it for da church."

Leland expressed his gratitude, wrote down the address, and then asked whether he could send a car to pick it up. "Much flour," she amplified, "you send truck tomorrow." Since the Missionary District of

uth Dakota operated two Indian schools d one large mission home for Indian chil-en, and every one had perennial budget-y problems, Leland thought to himself at here would be happy recipients of the od lady's largesse, though the problem of mporary storage and of transporting these avy sacks to far-flung points was no small e. After profuse thanks, he hung up the ceiver and asked his secretary to send a ckage Delivery truck the following day.

The next morning Leland worked in the brary at the deanery until shortly before e hour of the mid-week communion serv-. . . .

At the conclusion of the service Leland as ual stepped out of the sanctuary to give e final prayer from the doorway. In the ment it took for the people to settle down their kneelers, he cast a furtive glance o the room adjoining the sanctuary. The ole place had taken on the aspect of a ngle bursting with a bumper crop of rub-r plants. . . .

Thinking a machete would not be amiss hacking his way to the office, he hurried wnstairs to seek the solution of the stery from his secretary. She was in near sterics. Gesturing wildly toward rubber nts in the office, the hall and the adjac-t kindergarten room, she said, "This is the our' from your Greek lady friend!"

But to point out that children growing up an Episcopal clerical household usually id themselves fairly free of unrealistic re-rictions is not to imply that deep and gen-ne religious emphasis does not underlie the dering of a parson's home. As for our own usehold, although "rarefield" would sel-m, if ever describe its atmosphere, reli-on is certainly a part of our daily home e. Grace is said at all meals, matters of th and conduct have a normal share in r conversation, attendance at some serv-on Sunday is assumed without argument, d family prayer has been among our rich-and most meaningful experiences.

One aspect of family prayer involves just sband and wife, and parenthetically, en-ely apart from the value that prayer has itself and the spiritual development it sters, we learned long ago that daily devo-ns together are one of the most certain ways in which a husband and wife can in-sure a happy and successful marriage. A habit of sincere prayer together can accom-plish this because it makes a disagreement of more than a few hours impossible, and a dispute lasting no longer than that can't be too serious.

* * * *

While I'm sure it could be much improved upon, the elementary procedure we evolved formed a satisfactory basis for family wor-ship in the years between the babyhood and adolescence of our boys. What with a thou-sand demands on parents' time, the entire family could not always be together at the children's bedtime, but those who could car-ried on in this way: first, one of us read a short passage from the New Testament; St. Mark's Gospel is a good starter. Brief com-ments were made on the passage, and some-times there were questions. Then, in Prayer Book fashion, the one chosen leader that night would say, "The Lord be with you," the others would respond, "And with thy spirit," the leader would continue, "Let us pray," and we would kneel together. Then one of the boys would lead in the Lord's Prayer, whereupon each in turn would say an extempore prayer, after which we would all repeat a benediction together, adapting it to read, "The Lord bless us and keep us, the Lord make His face to shine upon us and be gracious unto us, the Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon us and give us peace and strength and joy in His serv-ice. Amen."

The content of the children's extempore prayers was extremely varied, and from time to time I jotted down snatches of them directly after they had gone off to bed. Al-most always there was some note of thanks-giving, as in the first line of this prayer of Craig, who was five, and Leighton one: "I thank Thee for the many privileges of this life. Help Leighton that he may not shriek so much, and help me that I may not lose my temper at him." Or this prayer of Leigh-ton, when he was eight: "O God, I thank Thee for the protection we have had this day, that none of us was hit by an auto or by a truck or struck by a baseball bat. I thank Thee for all the wonders of nature, especially of the planets and the stars."

GENE E. BARTLETT
WESLEY P. FORD
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HOMER J. R. ELFORD

God Stoops to Conquer

GENE E. BARTLETT, First Baptist Church, Los Angeles, California

In the mountains of Switzerland is a village of great charm, called Zermatt. It lies at the foot of the famous Matternhorn. When you have taken the cog railway from the foot of the mountains up to the village, you think that you have gone as high as you possibly can. But it is probable that the next day you will start again, taking another branch of the railway and going on up to that highest settlement in Europe, a tiny place called Gornergrat. From this point you will look over at the Matterhorn and some eight other peaks. Between the peaks are the glaciers and the so-called eternal snows. You will find yourself deeply stirred by so majestic a sight. Then in time you will start down the mountain again, and if you watch you will notice that there is a stream flowing from the base of the glaciers. And then you will see that the stream that flows through the center of the village of Zermatt has come from the eternal snows. There is a majesty about the glaciers and the eternal snows. But there is a beauty, too, in the stream that flows from them, making meadows green and giving people life and refreshment.

Turn now to our Christian faith and see in this the picture of the meaning of God. His majesty and eternity? Yes. But the good news of the Christian faith is that He has also come down into human life as near as any man's need. There is a flowing stream through all of life, and it is God come to man.

This is at least in part the meaning of the words which are found in the Letter to the Philippians. Here in the second chapter Paul, reminding the early church of its faith, spoke thus of Christ, "He humbled himself and became obedient unto death." Think of it! The majesty of God has become intimacy. He is not only like the towering peaks for our adoration; He is also in the flowing stream for our salvation.

How close did God come when He humbled Himself in Christ?

EVERY LIFE IS SIGNIFICANT

For one thing, it was so close He has given significance to every life. In our modern age we may think in terms of statistics, but the Christian faith knows only of souls. There is no such thing as the unimportant minority or even the insignificant one.

But how can there be significance in every life? You can't doubt that Jesus saw it so: one sheep out of ninety-nine, one coin out of twelve, one out of a family. In the revelation of Jesus the very heart of God yearned for that one and rejoiced when it was found. But more than His teaching was the very fact that Christ humbled Himself to search for that very one. He came as Physician seeking and saving those who were lost. From His birth in a manger, where He came among those for whom there was no room, to His death upon a cross between two outcasts, that's where He was to be found, humbling Himself that He might redeem and recall. His life is more eloquent than His words. There as no person so far down that somewhere in the descent he lost his significance before God. Wherever he was, he was a soul to be redeemed, a son of God to be called home.

If this seems to you startling beyond words, stop for a moment and consider. Even human love at its best has that quality. The heart of our city was moved recently when a tiny child was lost in the storm. When the word came how did you feel? Is there a man callous enough to say that it was only one child and there are thousands left? To the contrary. From some place deep within the heart of every knowing person in the city, there went out a longing and a sympathy. One child out of thousands, but that child was infinitely significant. If it can be so in the hearts of men how much more is it in the heart of God! No life can count itself insignificant. "He humbled Himself" that we might know.

FORGIVENESS FOR EVERY SIN

He has also come close enough for us to this is where the healing stream flows by our find forgiveness in every sin. To some of us lives.

Anyone who has struggled to learn a new language will know how difficult it is to pronounce some words. But do you know the

ost difficult words to speak in any lan-
age? I suspect it is the two, "Forgive me."
e only words I know more difficult are,
do forgive you." In some ways they are
yond our speaking, only God can say them.

We shall have missed it if we make all
is too cheap. A flippant forgiveness is only
coating to cover our sin. The kind of for-
veness that has been revealed in God, who
mbled Himself, may perhaps be seen in
e words that Starr Daily gives us about his
rthly father. This man moves among us to-
y as one redeemed from a life that seem-
hopelessly enslaved in crime. In one of
s writings he has told us particularly of his
ther. Year by year that father was hurt
he saw his son from the age of twelve
ve into crime, Yet, the father's love never
't the boy even in his degradation. On one
casion the father had arranged for the pre-
ture end of a sentence, and on the way
me he spoke of the joy he felt at his son's
edom. Yet, Starr Daily tells us that even
they rode along he was quietly planning
s next crime.

Let his own words tell the story from
ere, "The next morning my father heard
e news. It broke his heart but not his faith.
e came immediately to the jail, put his
nd through the bars and held mine. He
ffered in silence. When the jailer hold him
s time was up, he spoke briefly, 'It's all
ght, son. Somehow, in some way it will
made all right.' With that he left . . . I
ver saw my father again." But can you
ubt that it was the continuing influence
that father which God used finally to
netrate prison walls and to heal the heart
that boy?

But again, it needs to be said as Jesus was
nstantly saying, If human love can do that,
w much more the love of God! If man can
rgive with a patience and a self-giving like
is father, how much more must our Heav-
ly Father so forgive! What more vivid de-
ription of the way in which "He humbled
mself" than that the eternal God should
forgive. So real is it that the New Testa-
nt abounds in words like these, Saviour,
deemer, Emmanuel—God with us. That's
w close He has come. There is forgiveness
near as your need. He humbled Himself
at it might be so.

SUPPORT FOR EVERY SUFFERING

There is also support for every suffering
at God has brought to human life. With
great hunger some will ask, What support?
For it is often in the very nature of our
suffering that it leaves us feeling lonely and
cut off.

In our day we have a phrase which describ-
es the knowledge we have acquired. We call
it "know how." But such knowledge by itself
is not enough to meet the profoundest ex-
periences of the human heart. You not only
need "know how," you also need "now why."
For we have a hunger for meaning. But even
deeper, it's is necessary in suffering to
"know Whom." Do you walk alone? And the
answer is handed you still warm from the
hands of those who have passed through. No,
it is not alone. They have been through, and
they tell you God was there. Even in the
valley of the shadow, He was there. They use
every poetical phrase to express it: "ever-
lasting arms beneath," "Thou art with me,"
"Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort," "the
peace that passes all understanding." The
phrase is not important; the experience is.
He humbles Himself and walks with us
through suffering.

JUSTICE WHERE WRONG HAS BEEN

There is one more important way which
shows how close God has come: He has en-
tered in to bring justice for every wrong.
Carlyle reading of the wrongs which preced-
ed the French Revolution added a passion-
ate word, "What would I have thought of
God if there had been no French Revolu-
tion?"

The Pilgrims who finally reached our
shores made two false starts. The first boat,
the Speedwell, developed bad leaks and
showed herself unseaworthy. And after the
second time some of the Pilgrims did, what
you and I might have done; they decided not
to try it again up and went back to London,
never setting out with the Mayflower.

This is a testing which comes in every pil-
grimage, whether it be for justice between
races, or a world that can live in security
and peace, or the awakening of peoples which
have long been asleep. Not many pilgrimages
for justice get off the first time. And each
time some turn back. But the greatest sus-
taining faith I know is right here, "He
humbled Himself," and ever since has work-
ed that justice might come where wrong
exists.

It's a faith as broad as life itself, and all that has been said revolves like a wheel around one central truth that ought to be taken with us today. God has not only majesty but intimacy. He has stooped to conquer that we may rise again to fullness of life.

The Gift of Today

WESLEY P. FORD, Central Christian Church, Pasadena, California

Anticipation of "big events" is one of life's joys. To plan for a picnic, a vacation, a trip or for the last day of school is always exciting. And then there comes that glorious morning when one arises to say, "This is the day!" It was such a joy, except that its nature was deeper, that the psalmist expressed when he spoke of the marvelous blessings that God had poured out upon the people. Calling them to recognition and celebration he said, "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

An examination of the evidence plus honesty will lead each of us to say with the sunrise, "This is the day which the Lord has made." God offers no greater gift than today. Yesterday is gone. It will never return. Tomorrow is hidden; we approach it with hope and with awe, but it remains a mystery. But today belongs to each who will claim it. God has made the sun to rise upon this day and to shine on this day only. It is marked, it is lighted, it is warmed by God's sun. It is health giving. This is the day. Let us, therefore, live.

Today is meant for achievement. It provides opportunity for the fulfilment of some aspiration. With each day the sun rises, and the sun sets. There is a beginning and an end. The hands of the clock make a complete circle. The completeness of a day calls us to the completion of some portion of life's responsibility.

While God makes certain that the sun is in the sky, he cannot always insure sunshine on one's particular path. Only as each permits the sun to rise for himself by removing the clouds of doubt and fear and on his own life, each will know the miracle working power that comes from on high.

THE SUN ALSO SETS

It is important to let the sun rise on each new day and it is also important to let it set. God clothes the night in darkness in order that we might rest free from burdens. The experiences of a day often lead us into the strain of anxiety, which strain is meant to be removed as the setting of the sun bids us rest. Rest will not be assured by taking off our work clothes nearly so much as by taking of our work worries. More important for the night than a change of costume is a change of attitude. That we might close our eyes on burdens, and trust God, the night is set in darkness.

While we want a sense of achievement and wholeness each day, we remain aware that every day is related to other days. With the setting sun then we rest, but with faith in tomorrow. The fact of tomorrow increases our personal responsibility for decisions. We are ever faced with the question, "When?" When to act? When to commit life? When to build a church?

Delay is easy, but often costly. I recently experienced the cost of delay in a simple circumstance. We had a dead palm tree in our yard. A man who stopped wanted to take it out at a cost of $35, but I am a believer in "do it yourself." The second man stopped and wanted to take it out for $30. Some weeks passed and the third man, to my surprise and disappointment, agreed to take it out for $15. I finally removed the tree and saved the $15. Had I acted earlier I would have saved $35.

While delay is costly, so is haste, especially when prompted by anger. One of the serious conseqquences of hasty action is seen in an experience in the life of Moses. He had been up on Mt. Sinai receiving the Commandments from God. According to the account, when the Lord finished speaking, he gave to Moses the two tablets of stone. "And the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God." With these stone tablets, Moses went down the mountain. When he came near the camp, he discovered that there had been a revolt and that in his absence they had made the golden calf. "When he saw the calf and the dancing Moses' anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them.'

re were the only written records of the mmandments, and in angry haste, Moses troyed them. He is reported to have been only person ever to break all ten Comndments at once.

Aware of the cost of delay or haste, each us must answer the question "when?" ere is not always a clear answer. Judgnt is important. "When Jesus knew that hour had come," he acted accordingly. e may not always be as certain as Jesus s that the hour has come but with faith must act on the light we have, or miss. is is the day!

RIGHT DIRECTIONS

With each today we do not arrive at some al destination, but we ought to be found ving in the right direction. When the servt who had been sent by Abraham to seek a wife for Isaac, found Rebekah, he wed his head and worshipped the Lord o had led him by the right way. The goal to be found on the right way.

An important discipline for the right way the art of subordination until each finds nself in relation to God's ultimate goals. ram went out at the call of God to a land did not know, but to which God promised lead him. He obeyed and "looked forward the city whose builder and maker is God." ch was the goal of his life. As Abraham ved across the desert and plains, wherevhe stopped, he "built an altar to the Lord d pitched his tent." So this one who spent life in search of the City of God spent days of his life in tents.

During the last war, on a warm Sunday ning in July, a French officer was exeed by the Nazis. Just before his death, he ote: "I should like my countrymen to ow that I am dying that France may live. I had to begin over, I would travel the me road. In a few minutes I am going out prepare the tomorrows that sing."

This is the day that the Lord has given . My great joy is not in arrival but is to found on the right way subordinating rsonal ends, preparing the tomorrows that g. Are we willing to live in tents today at the City of God may be more certain morrow?

While it is important that we be moving the right direction each day, it is impornt that we be moving. What we do or fail do counts toward life's long range goals. this is the day and if a world of justice der God is at least a part of our hope, then it is each one's responsibility to move toward the goal. Arnold Bennett once wrote, "A man may desire to go to Mecca; he may drown before he gets to Port Said; he may perish on the coast of the Red Sea. But he will not be tormented in the same way as the man who, desiring to reach Mecca, never leaves Briton. Most of us have not left Briton. We have not even taken a cab to Ludgate Circus." Such insight points up a serious condition of our day.

HOPE OF TOMORROW

In our Christian faith we see the hope of tomorrow. We believe that the answers to the great problems of the world are to be found in the love, the mercy, the justice, the kindness of God. We believe that the Christian faith propagated enthusiastically can yet redeem the world from its man-made, ugly curses. But even those of us who profess to believe in the Christ way are reluctant to make the goal of our days subordinate to the propagation of the Christian gospel. If we believe that our faith offers answers to the unsolved problems of a bleeding, frustrated civilization, when do we begin to put that faith first? When do we invest our time and our energy? When do we invest our dollars? When do we set aside ten percent or more of our dollars for the churchly enterprise of the Kingdom of God? When do we leave the safety of port to sail out on this great adventure risking something for Christ's sake? Why has God given us the gift of today?

When the manuscript of Olive Schreiner's great work, *Woman And Labor,* was destroyed in a fire that burned her home, she rewrote it and of her work said. "What matters it to me if I am not at the oar when the little boat pulls into harbor. To know that I have pulled at the oar—that is enough for me." Well, here we are, each of us possessing the gift of a day, God's most glorious gift; but are we really pulling at the oar? Is our community, is our world, really moving toward the City of God because of our use of this day? Let each ask himself, "Is the spending of my dollars today a pull upon the oars that will bring humanity nearer to the kingdom of love, justice and good will?"

Yesterday is a memory, tomorrow is a dream, but today is God's gift. "This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." As the sun rises upon this day it gives light, energy, warmth, and we know it is filled with surprises. For each who will, it holds the promise of achieve-

ment. Today we will not reach life's ultimate goal, but we can be found on the right way. And, if we will, we can be making progress so that our todays insure the land of promise for those who will live tomorrow. If we really look forward to the city whose builder and maker is God, then our talents, our energy, and our things will be used today in a manner that will make possible that city.

This is it; that glorious day of adventure, God's gift. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. But let it be a day of decision in terms of ultimate values.

Islands of Opportunity

TERRELL M. SHOFFNER, Grace Evangelical and Reformed Church, Newton, N. C.

St. Paul left Titus, a young convert, on the island of Crete to exercise his new faith in a needy situation. When Titus later learned that the task assigned to him was a very tough one he wrote a letter of complaint. In his answer Paul agreed with his young disciple that the situation was not pleasant or easy and that he knew the Cretians were a bad lot, "liars, evil beasts, slow bellies." But he did not tell him to come home. Instead he wrote, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things which are wanting." What to Titus was an evil island to escape from was in the eyes of St. Paul an island of opportunity to be thankful for.

In our time there are islands of Crete, too, islands not to be escaped from, but islands of opportunity where it is our duty to "set in order the things that are wanting."

THE ISLAND OF THE FORTY PERCENT

Approximately forty percent of our nation's population has no connection with any religious body and we have no way of knowing that the other sixty per cent is really Godly. Of course, we are grateful that a major portion of our people do have church connections, but we should be thankful about the forty percent, too, thankful that we can do something for them in the name of Christ. What a grand thing it is to be able to preach the Gospel by word, by disposition and by deed. We have been redeemed for just such opportunitis. The unconverted are a call to us like the needy in Macedonia were a call to St. Paul. Paul heard the call and responded, "And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them." For the forty percent of the population of the United States we have the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Their spiritual lack is calling to us, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." They are our island of opportunity.

THE ISLAND OF THE DESTITUTE

A second island of opportunity to be thankful for are the destitute of the world. Of course, we cannot be thankful that two-thirds of the world's population is underfed, but we can be thankful that even the least of us can feed the hungry and clothe the naked. This island is not the will of God, but He cannot change it into an island of plenty unless we help Him. He has supplied the world with plenty, but this plenty has been left in our hands; we are His stewards. Such a condition does not make for peace and goodwill among men, but for all forms of evil, ill-will and conflict.

This island of the destitute affords us a great opportunity, not merely to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, but to minister to our own spiritual need. Our spiritual growth is always in proportion to our Christ-like service to one another. With our material means we can gain spiritual ends both for ourselves and for others. And this is the will of God. The island of the destitute is our island of opportunity "set in order the things which are wanting."

THE ISLAND OF THE RACE PROBLEM

Another island of opportunity in our land today to be thankful for is is the island of the race problem, and particularly the problem between the white and black races. It is unfortunate that we have a race problem. It is not the will of God, and we wish that it did not exist. We cannot be happy for it, but we can thankful that we have the privilege of helping to remove the problem. We cannot run away from it, and should not wish to if we could. When we think soberly we now that all races should live together in peace and mutual helpfulness. To this problem we have the opportunity of saying in the spirit of Christ, "There is neither white or black, but both are one in Christ Jesus." When confronting this rugged island we can say that God "hath made of one blood

nations of men for to dwell on all the e of the earth." We can say that God is Father of all races, and that all men are thers. And we can do more than say these ngs; we can live like brothers and like ldren of God our Father. In our hearts d in our actions we can sing in the spirit a little child:

Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world,
Red and yellow, black and white,
They are precious in his sight,
Jesus loves the little children of the world.

THE ISLAND OF INTERNATIONAL TENSION

A fourth island of opportunity for us is the and of international tension. The tension pears to be eased at the moment. This eas- tension does not guarantee that we are ne with wars. There is still fear and ten- n, and the world needs the united efforts God and man. We do not believe that nations should be at odds with one another, so we cannot thank God for the present uneasiness. But thanksgiving has a place. We can be thankful that we can do something to ease the tension and banish the fear. Each one can "seek peace, and pursue it." We can pray that swords will be made into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. And we can say to the world, "Come, let us reason together." We can say by word and show by deed, "Perfect love casteth out fear." This modern day island of Crete offers us the opportunity of practicing the Sermon on the Mount. We can apply good to an evil situation.

We can do two things about our four islands of opportunity. First, we can bow in shame and in penitence and thank God for the opportunities they offord us for actively living our faith. And after our thanksgiving we can live our religion. For this cause we are left on these islands that we should "set in order the things which are wanting." These islands are waiting for us to rise and fight the fight of faith "with the Cross of Jesus going on before."

ow to Find Your Calling in Life

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And I said, "What shall I do, Lord?" and the Lord said to me, "Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do." — Acts 22:10

Many people say that they have no reason r living. Included in this number are some the 155 pepole who have committed sui- le by jumping from the Golden Gate idge. Definitely included is the young wo- n who hired an airplane, and when in dair, stepped out into the void, having t this note behind: "I have had nothing t discord, and I long for harmony. Per- ps I shall find music where I go." A ultryman, bound to a routine of feeding ickens and gathering eggs, says that he s no important moral reason for living. A ll-trained college graduate, out of work an economy of abundance, cynically asks pastor: "Do you really believe that God s something in mind for me to do? What out this business of a 'calling in life'?" Does our faith have an answer to these ople? Has God spoken clearly and definite- on this question? And, if so, where shall look for this answer? The reply is raight to the point. Yes, God has spoken. reveals to us that there is a true reason r the existence of each individual person. Every person who comes into this world comes for a definite end. He has a God-appointed task, a divine calling to fulfill. When each individual discovers what his particular task is, then he knows his reason for living.

This message of God comes to a clear sharp focus in connection with the greatest crisis in the life of the Apostle Paul. He had set out for Damascus to take Christians as prisoners. But before Paul reached the city he was confronted by Jesus Christ. In the blaze of a great light a voice said to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He answered and said, "Who are you, Lord?" The answer came back, "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting." Paul then asked, "What shall I do Lord?" The Lord replied, "Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do." This incident suggests to us how we may find our divine calling and also how God guides us into the fulfillment of it.

CHRIST AS LORD

First, if we would find our divine calling we must accept Jesus Christ as the Lord of our lives.

Not until Paul accepted Christ as the Lord of his life did he discover his divine calling. Before his conversion Paul certainly had a task. He was then busily engaged in slaughtering Christians. He was so efficient in this work that the author of Acts pictured him as "breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord."

But when Paul met Christ on the Damascus road he realized that he had been engaged in the wrong task. When he heard the words, "Saul, Saul, why do you prsecute me?" this man discovered that he had completely missed his divine calling. He came to see that he had been striving to fulfill a self-appointed task. Thus it was that he cried out, "What shall I do, Lord?"

It is equally true today that a man can never discover his divine calling until he accepts Jesus Christ as the Lord of his life. And illustration of this truth is a case which recently came before a court of human relations. A middle-aged woman had attempted to commit suicide. She said that she had no reason for living. Her counselor told her that she must learn something of the sacredness of life. He said that she must find a reason for living. He recommended that she begin by attendnig church every Sunday. We know that the counselor was right. If through the ministry of the church this woman were to accept Christ as the Lord of her life, she would be well on the way toward finding her reason for living.

TO SEEK DILIGENTLY

Secondly, if we would find our Divine calling we must seek diligently to know what it is.

After Paul had accepted Christ he sought earnestly to know God's plan for the life. He did this expressly at the Lord's bidding. Christ had commanded, "Rise, and go into Damascus and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do." Paul arose and went into the city. There he was told by Ananias that God wanted him to be a witness for Him to all men.

Like Paul, we in our time must seek diligently to know what our divine calling is. If we sincerely desire to know our appointed task, like Paul we shall be rewarded. The words of Christ are an infallible guide: "Ask, and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you."

Many of us will find our particular mission in life largely confined to service performed in one vocation. Through the service which we perform as a teacher or a doctor or a lawyer, we may find our way into the plan which God has made for our lives. A call to one of these or other professions often proves to be God's divine call. Thus it is important that a man choose his vocation carefully and prayerfully.

USE OF TALENTS

In choosing a vocation let us be guided by our native talents or gifts. They have come from God. Very often they offer a clue to the task which God would have us perform. Let us also be guided by the needs of our fellow men. God has placed us here to meet certain of these needs. Finally, let us be guided by our consciences. Through them God speaks to us as the still small voice.

This was most certainly the way that Ida Mae, a girl from backwoods West Virginia, found her calling in life as a public health nurse. Her home on Deep Creek would make most people think that such a decision was impossible. Ida Mae's parlor was literally full of chickens and full also of an assortment of half-brothers, half-sisters and cousins. The adult woman who present was not her mother; Ida Mae's mother had died a suicide. Her father was not present either. He was living in a city with a woman to whom he was not married.

Close by the backwoods home was Ida Mae's broken-down school house. The church that stood next to it was not in much better condition. Yet in that simple backwoods church this young girl found Jesus Christ and accepted him as her Lord and Saviour. A few years later, when we made her acquaintance. she was seeking to discover her calling in life. She wanted to bring assistance to her people and to others like them. She wanted to give them cleaner, more Christ-like homes. She decided to train to be a nurse.

While in training Ida Mae had her moments of serious doubt concerning her calling in life. In a letter she said:

"When I went home Thanksgiving I found things so neglected. Jane was being kept out of school to help with the work. I keep telling myself that I am doing the most advisible thing by being here and maybe sometime I can help them in a big way. Please pray for me and the kids. I do appreciate your interest in me. It makes me want to become

do something with the life God has given e. In nursing I feel that I can carry out is plan. "Pray that I will be a workman at needeth not to be ashamed. I remember ese words, 'All things are possible for ose who love the Lord.' "

Yet Ida Mae finished her training and for me years has been serving as a public alth nurse in West Virginia. She has truly und her calling in life and through her pable service scores of people from back- oods and city alike have found newness of e in both body and soul.

HONORABLE WORK

This young nurse freely chose, but for me of us it will seem as if our vocation s been forced upon us. Circumstance has emed to dictate that we accept the first b which came our way. But if it is an norable work, it may still be our God-ap- inted task. Therefore, let the farm hand e that as he plants and reaps he is labor- g together with God to supply hungry peo- e with wholesome food. Let the coal miner alize that he is working with God to keep ousands of homes, schools and hospitals arm. Let the factory worker know that she working with God to provide warm, in- pensive clothing for thousands of people ho have limited incomes. Let the housewife alize that he is working with God to keep sponsibility for the making of a home. In- ed, let every person take a close second ok at his job and consider seriously whe- er it may not be his divine calling.

In his poem, "How the Great Guest Came," dwin Markham tells of Conrad the Cob- er's interpretation of his job:

Doubled all day on his busy bench,
Hard at his cobbling for master and hench,
He pounded away at a brisk rat-tat,
Shearing and shaping with pull and pat
Hide well hammered and pegs sent home,
Till the shoe was fit for the Prince of Rome,
And he sang as the threads went to and fro:
"Whether 'tis hidden or whether it show,
Let the work be sound, for the Lord will know."

This attitude is essential if one would rely discover his God-given reason for liv- g.

THE SHINING MOMENT

But where shall the unemployed man seek to find his divine calling? Even in our American economy of abundance there are still some who have no work. Can it be that God also has a particular task for him to perform? A Chicago minister became certain of it.

One day a young man of about twenty-one called at his church study. "I am out of work and am sick and tired of drifting around," he complained. "I don't seem to fit in anywhere. I'd like to know why I came into the world, anyway. I have come very near to suicide often!"

The clegyman was patient, understanding and helpful. He had a long visit with the youth. He promised to help. The youth left the church determined to keep searching for his divine calling.

A few weeks later he found it. A well-known Chicago theatre went up in flames. This youth assisted with the rescue work. He was fatally burned and carried to a city hospital. The clergyman was summoned. As he looked into the scarred face of the dying youth he saw a new light in his eyes. Said the young man just before he died, "Maybe it was for this cause that I came into the world." In one moment of intense crisis he had discovered his reason for living.

This has been the experience also of many who gave their lives in World Wars I and II and again in the Korean War. Both men and women, young and old, have come to know God's supreme purpose for their lives through one final act of heroism on the battlefield. Thirty seconds of blazing heroism is often sufficient to light up the purpose of a whole lifetime.

FULFILLMENT OF OUR CALLING

Finally, having discovered our divine calling, the Scriptures make it clear that we must depend upon God to guide us into the fulfillment of it. The Apostle Paul did exactly this. Our text and context emphasize the great extent to which he relied upon God's guidance. At the Lord's bidding he arose from the ground and set out toward Damascus again. But this time he was blind and he had to be led by the hand. Paul took this first step in the fulfillment of his divine calling by trusting that in due time God would mark the second. He was not disappointed. Throughout his entire lifetime Paul depended upon God to guide him step by step into the fulfillment of his task as apostle to the Gentiles.

In our own day we can learn a lesson in trust and dependence from a Hudson River pilot. He guides his boat by steering toward channel buoys. At night each channel buoy bears a flashing light. The careful pilot steers from light to light. The Hudson River winds in such a way that he can often see only one flashing light at a time. This does not dismay him. He knows that when his boat comes abreast of the first light, a second one will come into view. Even so, let us not be dismayed if God only permits us to see one step at a time. He knows what is best for us. It is enough for us to have the assurance that He is steadily and surely guiding us toward the complete fulfillment of our calling.

STEP BY STEP

This certainly has been the experience of Donald who is now a sophomore in a Presbyterian college in the South. Before attending school he lived in a small coal-mining town that sprawls at the foot of a brooding mountainous refuse pile that glows like a pillar of fire by night and sends heavenward a pillar of cloud by day. The town consists of the mine, a company store, sixty houses, a school and a Presbyterian Church. While he was moderator of Westminster Fellowship, Donald helped to build that church. He was a charter member of the church and he was present on the day when the building was dedicated.

Donald had a part in the dedication ceremonies which were consummated with the tolling of the bell in the new church steeple. When the bell stopped ringing and the doors were thrown open, Donald joined the throng of people who entered the new building on a tour of inspection. He lovingly touched it here and touched it there. For Donald had helped with the construction and had built himself into the church. His investment in the building included the simple wooden cross which graced the communion table. He had made with his own hands this symbol of the Saviour's love and victory. It was also a symbol of the fact the living Christ was at work in his heart helping him to discover his calling in life.

Not long after the dedication of the building this coal miner's son declared himself a candidate for the Christian ministry. He is now under the care of a West Virginia Presbytery and receiving the benefits of the careful counseling of its candidate's committee.

Donald has need of this careful counseling, for it has not been easy to go from the small mining town to the university city, from an underprivileged educational background to an exacting academic setting. He has advanced one step at a time. God has been guiding him and has made His presence felt at each bend in the road, at each turning of the river. Donald believes with all of his heart that he has discovered his calling in life and that God is guiding him into the complete fulfillment of it.

Indeed each and every person may be certain that God has given him a specific task to perform in this life. It will be the true significance and glory of life to accomplish this work. Each may hopefully inquire, "What shall I do, Lord?"

Each of you will be certain to fulfill your divine calling if you will depend upon God to guide. No matter how humble your appointed task may seem to be, He will guide you steadily toward its fulfillment. He will sweetly bend your will. God has a personal interest in each of you. Trust Him to mark your way step by step.